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## Viewing cable 05PORTAUPRINCE3059, IMPLICATIONS OF A PREVAL PRESIDENCY

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See also the [FAQs](#)

### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags #cablegate and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. #[05PORTAUPRINCE3059](#).

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">05PORTAUPRINCE3059</a>	2005-12-14 19:42	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Port Au Prince

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.haiti-liberte.com/archives/volume5-1/Campagne%20des%20E.U..asp>

<http://www.haiti-liberte.com/archives/volume5-2/WikiLeaked%20Cables%20Reveal%20Obsessive.asp>

<http://www.haiti-liberte.com/archives/volume5-2/Campagne%20des%20E.U..asp>

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 003059

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR

DRL

S/CRS

SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR

INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)

TREASURY FOR MAUREEN WAFER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/13/2010

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: IMPLICATIONS OF A PREVAL PRESIDENCY

REF: A. PAUP 2994

[1B.](#) FBIS 12/14/2005

[1C.](#) "HAITI PREVAL CAMPAIGNS IN JACMEL..."

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs Timothy M. Carney for reasons 1.4(b).

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary. Former President René Preval is the acknowledged front-runner in the Haitian presidential race, and his past association with Aristide and Lavalas the central issue of the campaign. His victory is not a foregone conclusion: his rivals have only begun to expend significant campaign resources, and may still form a united-front to oppose him (ref A). Several aspects of Preval's personality and previous performance as President cause concern, however, a second Preval presidency could be more stable and productive than his first. Most importantly, and taking Preval's December 13 statement on Aristide into account (ref B), we accept Preval's private renunciation of Aristide and Lavalas and see no credible evidence that Preval is preparing to reconcile with Aristide or reconstitute a regime based on violent intimidation. Additionally, unlike the case during either Preval's or Aristide's administrations (and for most of Haitian history), we expect the parliament and the cabinet to play a semblance of its constitutional role in balancing the power of the presidency. We believe that no matter who ultimately wins, our ability to promote our interests and

foster Haitian democracy will hinge on the development of the broad range of Haitian institutions that should serve as checks and balances on the presidency. End Summary.

#### The Horse Race

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12. (C) Every other candidate in the presidential race acknowledges Rene Preval is the man to beat. His strong showing has, however, energized his opposition, though the egos of his main rivals hinder efforts to form an anti-Preval front. Post's CID/Gallup poll, conducted in early November confirms Preval's wide lead. Preval polled 32% percent support, now-disqualified candidate Dumarsais Simeus 20%, with no other candidate higher than 5%. These results should be viewed with some caution. Polling occurred at a time when elections preparations remained uncertain and serious campaigning had yet to begin, and the relatively high support for Simeus reflects at least in part his dominance of the news coverage during the debate over his eligibility. A poll conducted by the Haitian organizer of post's presidential debates in early December (with less certain methodology) shows Preval with 42% and independent candidate Charles Henri Baker with 15%. (Baker polled less than 2% with CID/GALLUP: December pollsters did not include Simeus.)

13. (C) Simeus has consistently mentioned Preval as his most likely ally in meetings with Emboffs over the past several weeks, but it is doubtful that Simeus could deliver the entirety of his personal support to whichever candidate he chooses to endorse. Finally, Preval is the best known of the candidates about whom nearly all Haitians have strong, if not polarized, feelings. It is unlikely that Preval can garner additional significant support from undecided or loosely committed voters. Preval will, on the other hand, enjoy the benefits of perceived momentum and bandwagon support if the perception remains that he is the prohibitive favorite. In any case, as reported in ref A, if he does not achieve an outright victory in the first round, it seems certain that he will proceed to the second round against a candidate representing some kind of coalition united in opposition to him.

#### Cause for Concern

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14. (C) Preval's defects are well-known and still apparent. While he appears to be in good health and has been sharp and focused in his meetings with Emboffs, a variety of sources state that he continues to drink -- he will join the Charge d'Affairs in a whiskey. Preval is noticeably reserved and reticent, and this reticence seems a piece of his notorious past failings as an executive and his inability or unwillingness to stand up to Aristide during his first term, even after Aristide's henchmen targeted Preval's family and friends. Many close to Preval praise his character but admit he lacks force of will in many respects. When the DCM gently took him to task several weeks ago for failing to condemn violence in the wake of vandalism at his first campaign event, Preval lamely replied that he saw no need to start "a debate with the other side they won't let me win."

15. (C) Preval has tempered his doctrinaire socialist views, both as a result of the disintegration of the Lavalas movement and changes in Haiti and the region, though he continues to frame Haitian politics in discussions with Emboffs in terms of class conflict. Preval tinkered with economic liberalization and privatization during his first term, but allowed Aristide to brazenly exploit the most important parastatals, most notably the phone and electricity companies, as sources of patronage (as well as illegal payments and kickbacks, as alleged by a complaint in federal court in Miami). In conversations with us, he has voiced support for further privatization, including port operations.

#### Cause for Hope

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16. (C) We see no credible evidence that Preval is prepared to reconcile with Aristide or Lavalas leaders. In all his private dealings, Preval has consistently rejected any further association with Aristide and Lavalas, and bitterly denounced Aristide in conversations with the Charge and other Embassy officers. In building a national slate for his L'Espwa coalition, Preval assiduously recruited candidates not connected to Lavalas. Preval firmly rejected Lavalas party leaders, offer to become the Lavalas candidate in early September -- they struck their alliance with Marc Bazin only days afterward -- causing acrimony to reverberate among Lavalas leaders for weeks afterward. Preval told Polcouns during their first meeting in October meeting that he wanted to "put an end to Lavalas, chimeres, and the violence." According to another source, he refuses to take overseas phone calls in order to ensure that neither Aristide nor his supporters cannot talk to him. Preval persuaded his former

State Secretary for Security, Robert Manuel, to return as campaign manager: Manuel had fled Haiti to Guatemala in 1999 under threat from chimeres.

¶ 7. (SBU) During Preval's first public campaign appearance in the southern city of Jacmel on December 13, Preval broke his silence, stating that "President Aristide, like any other exiled political person, can return to the country whenever he wants." Pressed by journalists to elaborate on his position, Preval insisted that the Haitian constitution guaranteed that all Haitians "in exile" had the right to return home at any time, and that the President had no further role.

¶ 8. (C) Preval reiterated to Polcouns on December 12 that his opponents' attacks against him amounted to defamation and that he continued to assiduously reach out to the business classes. He stated that he had ongoing discussions with Haitian Chamber of Commerce President Reginald Boulos and other business people even as they continue to attack him publicly. He had the previous week met with the members of the Center for Free Enterprise and Democracy (CLED), a free-market institute, and reassured them that he favors economic liberalization and privatization. In response to a query about Simeus, Preval readily admitted that he hoped he could conclude an alliance, stating that Simeus would provide credibility on economic issues and that Simeus could hopefully foster his reconciliation with the business class. Pressed by Polcouns on the importance of publicly disavowing political violence, Preval answered that he planned to make a statement later in the day to the media that covered his meeting with visiting Dominican President Leonel Fernandez. Preval wryly added that he would denounce "verbal" violence (presumably directed at him) as well. (Note: Demonstrations and rioting during Fernandez' visit led to cancellation of his meeting with presidential candidates. Preval did denounce "all forms of violence" in his public remarks in Jacmel on December 13. End Note.)

Comment

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¶ 9. (C) Rumor swirls around Preval. Whether or not Haitians believe that Preval has broken with Aristide and Lavalas, many remain convinced that he is prepared to foment violence as a political tool. In either case, his opponents are finding it politically irresistible to tar him with the Aristide brush, further polarizing the campaign debate. Preval essentially dodged the issue of his relationship with Aristide in his public remarks in Jacmel, but we can expect that his opponents to seize on the remark that Aristide is free to return. On the other side, we sense that many Lavalas candidates, recognizing their party's weakness, now seek to create the impression of a reconciliation with Preval, and thus ride on his coattails. Preval's supporters among the masses seem to have a surprisingly forgiving opinion. They view him as an honest committed advocate for the poor, whom Aristide undermined and victimized. Unlike Aristide, they argue, Preval did not make extravagant promises he did not keep. For example, Preval's detractors still cite with outrage Preval's famous "swim to get out (of your difficult situation)" statement made near the end of his term in 2000, as a cynical admission of his failure as president. For his supporters, however, it is an illustration of Preval's willingness to make an honest assessment of the condition of Haiti's poor, in typically bleak Creole fashion.

¶ 10. (C) Comment continued. No matter who wins the presidency, the complexion of the next government is as likely to be determined by the prime minister and the parliament. Most observers assume that no single party will dominate the next parliament, and that the prime minister (elected by parliamentary majority and approved by the president) will be a compromise candidate. We can expect the quality of parliamentarians in the next government to be mixed, and the effectiveness of the prime minister and other cabinet ministers limited by an extreme dearth of administrative resources. Nevertheless, we will best serve our own interests and the long-term development of Haitian democracy by reinforcing the constitutional role of all three branches of Haitian government, and mitigating the Haitian tradition of an all-powerful president through a policy of energetic cultivation of parliament and the cabinet.

CARNEY